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The General Was a Spy

The Truth About General Gehlen and His Spy Ring.

By Heinz Höhne and Hermann Zolling.

Translated by Richard Barry from the German "Pullach Intern."

With an Introduction by Hugh Trevor-Roper and a Preface

to the American Edition by Andrew Tully.

Illustrated. 347 pp. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. \$10.

Gehlen

Spy of the Century.

By E. H. Cookridge.

Illustrated. 402 pp. New York: Random House. \$10.

By CHRISTOPHER FELIX

The Chief, Foreign Output Evaluation, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C. (By safe hand to Langley.)

Dear Chief:

Lest it be supposed that my report violates the Agency's charter by engaging in operations within the United States, let me hasten to point out that, except for Andrew Tully's Preface to the Höhne and Zolling book (and for our reputation, of course), the paper, print, and bindings are the only things American involved here. E. H. Cookridge is a British subject: his book was first published in England. Heinz Höhne and Hermann Zolling are Germans: Their book is an elaboration of 15 articles published in West Germany's *Der Spiegel* magazine in the spring of 1971, which were highly critical of Gen. Reinhard Gehlen's direction of the Federal Intelligence Service.

Both books tell the same story: General Gehlen, a German officer since 1920, wartime head of F.H.O. (Fremde Heere Ost—Foreign Armies East), the intelligence section of the German General Staff concerned with Eastern Europe, surrendered at war's end to the Americans with the offer to put himself, his files, staff and networks at their disposal. After some fencing, the offer was accepted, and the Gehlen organization was ultimately installed in a compound at Pullach, near Munich. In 1949 American support and supervision was transferred from the United States Army to the recently formed C.I.A.

In 1956 the Gehlen organization became the B.N.D. (Bundesnachrichtendienst), the West German Federal intelligence service, and Gehlen its "President." Long a favorite of Chancellor Adenauer, who referred to him as "My dear General Gehlen," the

General and his B.N.D. suffered setbacks in the 1960's, notably the revelation that one of Gehlen's trusted deputies, a former S.S. officer, was a

Christopher Felix is the pseudonym of a former American diplomat and intelligence officer. He is the author of "A Short Course in the Secret War," "Three Cornered Cover" by Mr. Felix, (with George Marton) will be published this fall.

longtime Soviet agent, and the B.N.D.'s involvement in the famous November, 1962, *Der Spiegel* affair. The latter added the enmity of Franz-Josef Strauss, the West German Defense Minister whose Bavarian C.S.U. (Christian Socialist party) was an essential prop of Christian Democratic rule, to the existing hostility of many Social Democrats.

In 1968 Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger, reportedly under some pressure from his Socialist partners in the "grand coalition," did not extend Gehlen's exemption from mandatory retirement. Gehlen's place, as president of the B.N.D., was taken by Gen. Gerhard Wessel, a former associate of Gehlen, but no longer his friend. In 1970, under the Brandt Government, a Social Democratic party official was installed in the B.N.D. as Vice President, former S.S. and Gestapo personnel were removed, and B.N.D. department heads were replaced, several by Social Democrats.

Although the story is the same in both books — down to a striking identity (and abundance) of detail — their approach differs. Cookridge, whose 13th book on secret operations this is, writes as the "expert." Nevertheless, he cannot avoid signs of regret at the apparent decline in later years of Gehlen's organization; the General is, after all, the hero of his book. In fact, at his hands Gehlen takes on the proportions of a superman.

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Höhne (author of "The Order of the Death's Head," 1970, and "Codeword: Direktor," reviewed on P. 40 in this issue) and Zolling, on the other hand, while recognizing Gehlen's accomplishments (and even defending him on occasion — not without flashes of national pride) are partisan. The B.N.D. under Gehlen, they plainly feel, let Germany down. "The Federal Republic," they write at the outset, "requires an efficient secret service if it is not to be exposed to unnecessary external dangers"; and their major charge against Gehlen is that from 1958 on, he and the B.N.D. were no longer efficient. Their opinion of the Gehlen organization for most of the years before that seems revealed in their frequent use of the phrase, "the Americans and their German minions at Pullach." This attitude, if understandable in the middle 1950's, carries a different weight nearly two decades later.

The German authors are severe about Gehlen's use of former Nazis and about his organization's "inordinate influence on government decisions with no controlling authority" to restrain it — given postwar West German history, that is a slap at Adenauer in particular and German Christian Democratic Governments in general.

The decline of the B.N.D. ("that secret service which was once regarded as the best in Europe," they add nostalgically but inconsistently, since they place its apogee in the period when Adenauer dominated and Gehlen & Co. were still "minions" of the Americans) they attribute variously to Gehlen's misconceptions and uncurbed powers, to the German tradition of regarding intelligence as falling almost exclusively in the domain of the military (they do have a good short essay on the historical development of the German intelligence services), and, among

*continued

other things, to "[snooping] in West German internal politics." The latter may or may not be so. I wouldn't know, Chief. But it seems to me that if it is so, the answer to excessive partisanship of a West German intelligence service when the Christian Democrats were in power is not necessarily to pack it with the opposition party when they come to power.

If the approaches of the two books are different, the books themselves nonetheless contain some remarkable similarities. One is that the authors would not last a week in any intelligence service. They are quite unaware of the essential human element in secret operations; to them it is all moving so many pawns around a vast board. As you once remarked, Chief, "perhaps only fiction can convey the reality of our work." Also, failing to understand the role of intelligence in larger policy, they greatly overestimate it. "Under the influence of [Gehlen's] daily situation reports on the East which painted Moscow's policy . . . in the blackest of colors," write Höhne and Zolling of the period around 1950, "... The U.S. secret service officers inevitably [sic] came to accept the political views [sic!] of their German partners. Senior U.S. secret service officers were soon pleading for an end to the Occupation regime on this side of the Elbe and the incorporation of West Germany into the political, military, and economic alliance of the West."

The role of "secret service officers" is not to:

plead major policies; and when

they do, they often have a reverse effect. The authors really should read the memoirs of those men, such as Dirk Stikker of the Netherlands, Paul-Henri Spaak of Belgium, and Dean Acheson, who, with the British and French, made and directed Western policy in those years. Cookridge, speaking of the East German Ministry of State Security, says flatly, "It was the extremely hostile intelligence produced by its Czechoslovakia section against the Dubcek Government which prompted Moscow into armed intervention there in 1968."

Moscow is quite capable of identifying the self-interest in East German intelligence reports, and, however suspicious the Russians may be, they do not make major decisions in the fashion Cookridge suggests.

Too, all three authors are given to the kind of inaccuracies, large and small, and to the sweeping generalizations that would spell quick failure for a secret intelligence service. Cookridge's chapter on "War of

the Radio Waves" is laughable. A better writer than the two Germans (who may be suffering in translation), Cookridge also succumbs to embroidery. On the Berlin telephone tunnel and the C.I.A. he says, "[Frank G.] Wisner was all for it, but he was at that time pre-occupied with C.I.A. operations in Guatemala." Anyone who thinks Frank Wisner couldn't keep an eye on two things at once doesn't know how affairs are conducted in a large organization — and obviously didn't know Wisner.

Cookridge has one item that really intrigued me. He quotes, with evident admiration, and as proof of the effectiveness of Gehlen's penetrations into wartime Russia, a radio message from an agent named "Minishkiy" stationed in "Stalin's Supreme Headquarters," dated July 14, 1942: "The war council in Moscow concluded its session during the night of July 13. Amongst those present were Shaposhnikov, Voroshilov, Mol-

otov and the heads of the British, American and Chinese military missions . . . the British representative demanded Soviet assistance in Egypt . . . offensive operations in two sectors of the front were decided upon." As you know, Chief, I was in Moscow in July, 1942. Foreigners never participated in Soviet "war councils." Soviet operations were never planned or discussed in the presence of foreigners. The Admiral commanding the British military mission was not at a level to "demand" anything of the Russians. (Rather than seeking Russian help in the Middle East, the British and Americans in July, 1942, were in fact planning the North African invasion, in part as a means of helping the Russians.) Finally, there was no Chinese military mission in Moscow. I guess it's a little late to follow this up, Chief.

Messrs. Höhne and Zolling are similarly carried away. On Gehlen's operations in Africa

they write: "The B.N.D.'s new African friends gave it, almost for the asking, what the ex-colonial powers such as Britain, France and Belgium had had to employ a comprehensive network of agents to obtain — pictures of the situation in the politically emergent continent of Africa." Come, come. Our German friends have apparently never heard of the French "Communauté" (nor of Monsieur Foccart). Nor of the Kenyan request to Britain for troops to put down local rebellion.

There is also their sweeping statement concerning the late 1940's: "The Americans also urged Gehlen to do business with the French. The U.S. secret service had barely any contact with the S.D.E.C.E. [Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage — French postwar secret service] but was most anxious to gain some insight into the policies of Paris." You will remember, Chief, that this was



General Gehlen in Hanover, 1958.

Just the moment when you and I, greeted as old friends, were in and out of the Paris "piscine" seeing the head of the S.D.E.C.E., that ours was but a small part of a relationship that flourished until the advent —perhaps I should say the onslaught—of de Gaulle 10 years later, and above all that it was neither an American need nor practice at that time on any level "to gain . . . insight into the policies of Paris" via the Germans.

I know these two books are the first the public has on the subject of the Federal intelligence service, Chief. This fact, together with the frequent direct and indirect allusions in the text and notes of both books to the B.N.D. sources, suggests the possibility that the B.N.D. — who were certainly aware of the authors' researches — decided to get into the act for themselves, and to provide a certain amount of information for their own purposes. An easy operation.

You'll have to get someone better versed in German politics today to tell you whether this is an effort by the present heads of the B.N.D. to distance the organization from Gehlen, and thus from public criticism in Germany of the former "president," and perhaps to gain favor with the ruling Social-Democrats, or an effort to show that the Social-Democratic changes since 1970 in the B.N.D. have not produced the necessary or desired reforms, or some other, more arcane, purpose. But you might want to pass this much along.

You might also want to pass along one last item, Chief. I learn from these books that General Gehlen has a son. Höhne and Zolling say he is named "Felix-Christoph." Cookridge says he is named "Christopher Felix." I swear to you, Chief, I never met Gehlen in my life. You know it. It's no more than a damnable coincidence.

Yours,
Chris. ■